

Cantwell, Baird, and Local Law Enforcement Team up to Fight Meth Funding Cuts - Cantwell, Baird to President: Lack of Commitment Hurts Local Communities- (February 22, 2006)

Vancouver, WA - Senator Maria Cantwell and Congressman Brian Baird today joined local law enforcement officials in vowing to fight President Bush's proposed cuts to federal meth funding. The lawmakers outlined their concerns with the impact funding cuts will have on local law enforcement and the safety of Southwest Washington communities in a letter to the President.

While methamphetamine production and abuse is by all accounts becoming a more serious national problem, federal funding to help state and local governments has steadily decreased since 2002, Cantwell and Baird wrote. We are extremely disappointed in the lack of commitment to fight methamphetamine in your fiscal year 2007 budget, and believe it sends the wrong signal to local officials working hard to address this problem. Our Washington constituents rightly demand more federal help for state and local law enforcement officials to make real progress in this fight.

The main federal programs that help local communities combat the spread of meth - COPS, Meth Hot Spots, Safe and Drug Free Schools, Byrne-JAG Grants - were cut 80 percent in the President's proposed Fiscal Year 2007 budget. Last year, both Cantwell and Baird successfully fought to restore federal meth funding that was cut in the President's FY06 budget. The lawmakers have vowed to do the same again this year.

With meth purity and meth-related arrests once again on the rise, local law enforcement officials say they need every penny they can get. The proposed cuts will impact their ability to target area clan labs, improve the prosecution of meth-related crimes, and crack down on meth trafficking.

Clark County Sheriff Garry Lucas, Vancouver Police Chief Brian Martinek, and Washington State Patrol Captain Mark Couey joined Cantwell and Baird today at the Vancouver Police Department to protest the funding cuts.

February 22, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush

President of the United States

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

We write to respectfully express our concern with your fiscal year 2007 budget request for programs that help fight the devastating spread of methamphetamine. While methamphetamine production and abuse is by all accounts becoming a more serious national problem, federal funding to help state and local governments has steadily decreased since 2002. Congress reversed this trend last year, but unfortunately your budget drastically cuts programs that local communities rely on to fight the meth epidemic; COPS, Meth Hot Spots, Safe and Drug Free Schools, and Byrne-JAG Grants were cut a combined 80 percent from their FY06 funding levels.

The methamphetamine abuse and control problem in the Northwest is an example of the need for additional funds. Our state of Washington ranks sixth in methamphetamine production despite having only the 35th highest population. Washington spends over \$56 million annually to combat this growing problem. Seizures and the number of methamphetamine laboratories in Washington have skyrocketed. According to federal law enforcement, the methamphetamine purity rate - a key indicator of the drug's negative effects on a community - has spiked from 28 percent to 73 percent in the past three years. The costs of cleaning up a contaminated site are devastating for local communities - reaching up to \$150,000 per site. A recent survey by the National Association of Counties found that 73 percent of the 200 county and regional hospitals had seen an increase in the number of people visiting emergency rooms for meth-related injuries and illnesses.

We are extremely disappointed in the lack of commitment to fight methamphetamine in your fiscal year 2007 budget, and believe it sends the wrong signal to local officials working hard to address this problem. Our Washington constituents rightly demand more federal help for state and local law enforcement officials to make real progress in this fight. We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Senator Maria Cantwell

Congressman Brian Baird

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